

## THE BRUSH-PILE ORCHARD

Late in the year 1913 I left high school and entered the employ of one of our suburban banks. Personnel practices and pay scales in 1913 were low, different and unlike today's.

Applying in person before the Cashier, I was informed that I might start my budding banking career if I were attentive, ambitious, serious, and willing to exchange my time for the opportunity of learning without pay. I agreed, and faithfully carried on with my duties for a matter of several months.

I was then informed by the Cashier, the only full time employee of the bank, that the janitor was quitting. He then told me the bank would be willing to pay a wage of \$25.00 per month to take over the job before the bank opened in the morning. All the while I was to continue with the bank's bookkeeping duties sitting astride a high round stool at an old English desk.

A few months so occupied and my apprentice days were over. I now became a full-time paid bank assistant. The promotion called for the termination of the janitorial services. Soon I was acting as a teller and learning and performing the many obligations of a trusted bank employee. The small institution granted no vacations, so on occasional Friday afternoons the Cashier would journey to San Francisco leaving me in charge for a few remaining hours till closing.

The task was meager, but the responsibility heavy for a boy of seventeen. Well do I remember my fears of not locking up securely. One day I recall peddling my bicycle to the bank and back home again a total distance of six miles just to be sure the combination had properly locked the safe.

Joyland Park the amusement center of the town was in its heyday. My duty required a return to the bank on many Saturdays and Sundays to open the small

vault for the deposit and safe keeping of the bank funds. Our little safe was too small to carry heavy deposits, so on Mondays, I, as a messenger for the bank would board the old electric street car for a trip downtown. Carrying these surplus funds of \$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00 with many gold pieces included was a very casual weekly event. Visualize, if you will, the risk involved in the transfer of these monies today, with no protection or accompanying guard.

During this period of growth, the bank increased its capitalization from \$25,000.00 to \$50,000.00. Acquiring a sense of prosperity by my promotions, I thought it wise to purchase a few shares of the bank's stock with some of my meager funds earned as a bank clerk and my youthful savings from a newspaper route and other miscellaneous boyhood jobs.

Moving along rapidly two years later, I was stricken with rheumatic fever and all the accompanying miserable complications. My career came to a sudden termination. No work, no job, Just rest!

America entered World War No. 1. My classification 4F. War over and on doctors order I must secure outdoor employment or occupation. Recuperating slowly I accept part employment driving for a local bank's public relations man. This outdoor effort brought me into contact with many farmers and fruit growers along the lower Sacramento River.

Those were the days when the P E A R was K I N G. A silent observer to all the exciting happenings about me was fascinating and exhilarating. Much passed before my eyes. I was also a good listener to the various conversations.

This was the day when banks sought out the optimistic and exuberant farmers and growers for their accounts and large deposits. Daily we passed the neat and prosperous orchards. Impressed by all the prosperity and success about me I fell prey to grandiose dreams for the future. This was what I wanted to do. Later my father was consulted and on his advice and judgment a small

thirty-five acre holding was purchased in the Natomas District a few short miles north-west of the City's downtown business area.

The consummation of this undertaking was a miracle in itself. My small savings along with the signing of notes and commitments to banks and others finally made it possible. River View Orchard in 1919 was but a vast expanse of virgin land and good clean air. Immediately I set out to transform this small acreage into a living actuality.

A small cottage was erected under a group of old oaks. Fortunately these desirable trees were left standing as well as a lone stately old oak. I had neither the courage or desire to cut this one venerable patriarch of them all, even though its spreading limbs prevented my farming this one half acre or more.

A team of horses, plow and other horse drawn implements were acquired. A strong hard working Portuguese named Tony Souza was hired. In the beginning it was he on whom I leaned heavily. Prior to his employment by me he had planted another orchard. We both were well aware of the strenuous task ahead. Together we marked and set out the plots of cherries, peaches and pears. Digging the holes was contracted, but Tony and I set out the trees. Each planting was carefully placed and tamped. This tiring operation went on for days.

Slowly I was acquiring more physical strength and confidence. I now could perform many arduous jobs and was hopefully looking forward to the bountiful days of production ahead. Fruit crops are slow to come into bearing, so I again filled in with a part-time position as a field man for a major fruit company.

Learning more about the economics of fruit and the advantages of a heavy producing orchard I let the trees grow and grow. They were developing large

frames and in my desire to attain volume I let them go. Higher and higher they reached, all the while showing tremendous growth and marvelous development of strong fruit buds.

I had waited long and patiently. It was difficult to head the tall trees back now, in spite of the warning of the older growers and the admonitions of the experienced specialists from the agriculture college at Davis. What should I do? The experts warned to cut and head back, but my observations noted the strong buds. Without fear or trepidation, I plunged headlong forward, following the long pruning method.

Working daily in the orchard, I knew the power of the wonderful rich soil. My constant association with all the aspects of my orchard kept me alerted and vigilant. Vetch was sown as a cover crop, later plowed back to increase the humus. Fertilizers were added to water from the Sacramento River, which was constantly applied to the thirsty soil, in fact the pump was rarely turned off during the long hot summers.

To supplement my meager funds for the long wait until production, kidney beans and corn were planted between the rows. This produced a very modest return for the time, though the mortgage was mounting all the while.

Late in 1922 I married and brought my bride to our little cottage. Two sons followed. Both were brought up in the little home which eventually expanded to eight rooms.

Farmers need the close companionship of a helpmate and family. Alone you are nothing--together you strive forward to another and brighter tomorrow. Well do I remember one evening soon after we were married. The hired man had taken off early for a bit of revelry in the "Big City" and had forgotten to milk our cow. Poor old bossy bellowed and bellowed. Finally my wife reminded me of the chore still undone, and suggested I go right to work. Her urgings were

in vain. I could not milk. In desperation she took the bucket and performed the task admirably. The next day we sold the cow.

All the while the trees were responding to meticulous care and treatment. The tonnage went up, up, and up. Some years production was thirty tons to the acre, but usually a good average of twenty-five tons were reached. An agreement for the sale of peaches and pears was consummated with a local cannery, the former Bercut-Richards Packing Company. This understanding was followed faithfully by both parties for the remaining years of my operation. A few of the early Bartletts were shipped East by the former Sacramento River Association. Later I became a Director of this fine Co-operative. The pollenization of the bartlett is of utmost importance. Interplanting of Comice pears solved most of the problems of setting the fruit, but the hardest and most difficult problems are created by man.

Dissatisfied producers constantly are disrupting orderly process and telling the other fellow how to run his business. Many large growers and some economic professors joined with this group in foisting a marketing agreement and jamming it down the throats of small producers. Briefly these orders advocate a lessening of the crop, either by dropping a percentage on the ground, or withholding delivery to a cannery.

I, as a small producer, contend the only way to succeed is through production. My motto is simple, produce, produce and produce. Any interference with nature's way is wrong. Marketing orders only place an umbrella over the heads of the inefficient. You keep him in business even though he would fail. His listless efforts compound the surplus, whereas he should be in another business, leaving the efficient to continue. An innovation, a fresh sales market, one to create more sales was opened on the farm and proved a success.

The scourge of pear trees, blight appeared early. Difficult as it was we fought with all our strength and energy. Along about this time my friends tried to induce me to join with them in the game of golf. I tried once, but immediately gave it up. My full attention was needed on the farm to save the afflicted orchard. Zinc Chloride was applied to branches and large limbs, then scraped off the deadly infection. Though badly battered the trees recouped and soon responded with heavy productivity. Later, new spray methods solved much of the blight problem. I was helped by many sound ideas and suggestions, advanced by our local farm advisor.

Along about this time word came to me from my old employer the Bank. I was elected to their board of directors. I remained there for many years, in fact until they merged with a State wide chain.

Operations were normal and running smoothly when I was again stricken by another attack of rheumatic fever, followed by pneumonia. It was now my wife who took over responsibility and carried on for the duration of the sickness. Weathering the problems encountered with patience and hope, we both emerged into a brighter and happier tomorrow.

Sometimes, winds of ferocious power, damaged or blew off the young setting fruit, and on occasions early spring frosts and rains took heavy toll of the crop. The disastrous effects of the depression followed. I was broke but could not give up.

Observing the havoc wrought by the elements man feels discouraged and sad. You wander aimlessly around amid the trees. Finally a branch slaps you in the face and another and another. You look up and the trained eye discovers the newly formed bud for the next season.

Immediately all shines bright and clear. You loudly exclaim with gusto and excitement. "Wait till next year!" To me this has great significance.

It is this alleged proof, or urge, that carries man on and on. The expectancy of another tomorrow! Without this desire man would indeed be lost.

Time changes many old habits, in fact destiny is its prime mover. My father, who was County Treasurer, was stricken with a heart attack. At his request to the Board of Supervisors, I was given a temporary appointment as County Treasurer. Four months later on the final day in office following the routine manner of relinquishing control, I thought it proper to give one final check. The follow through of this personal audit revealed a shortage of \$4,800.00. Immediately the whole office force was transformed to excitement and surprise and consternation. The warrant clerk in charge was called in and readily made admission of the irregularities. He paid for his offense and served time at Folsom.

My father, recovered from his illness, returned to the Office and carried on for some time. Following his death the Board offered me the full-time appointment to the treasurership, as a reward for vigilant service. This is how it appeared, but Dad, the old politician, had negotiated the appointment just before his death. My refusal to the Supervisors was obvious. Too much planning and effort had gone into the little farm, and how that is was a going concern, I could not give it up by serving two masters simultaneously. My decision: I would remain on the farm.

My sons were growing up, too. They drove our loaded trucks to the cannery. Sometimes peaches, but mostly pears. It was a long summertime job. Neighbor boys, my doctor's four sons and other young men followed. Young men liked the excitement and fast pace set by the ever ripening fruit.

Pickers were hired at the old labor office on 2nd Street. I found many willing to work, but some proved unfit and incapable of doing a day's work. These lazy shirkers when found wanting, were immediately taken back to town,

as it was too costly to the little organization to waste time on the unwilling who lacked spirit to perform a day's labor.

Planning and work went on all the while. Sacramento was then removing its street car tracts and rails. Granite stones quarried at Folsom Prison by convict labor were procured, rock and rubble necessary for fill and levee protection were available only for the asking, but rapid disposal from the downtown streets was a condition. My two trucks were hard pressed keeping up with the flow of this badly needed material. Unlimited number of truck loads of cobbles from the gold dredger tailings were also hauled to the river front location. Earth in great quantities for fill purposes was also deposited on this, the site of my future home. Two farm hands were eventually called upon to build the walls. The hand cut granite stones were now put to good use in building the enclosure, walls, walk and fences.

Prior to the building of my home on the river, this same setting was used for the filming of many motion pictures. The movie people in Hollywood had a listing of the location. They recognized its native beauty and charm. Wagon Track with Bill Hart, Steamboat around the Bend was another. Milton Sills, Jane Novak, Mary O'Brien, Mickey Rooney, Will Rogers and others were here. Many of the sturdy timbers used in the construction of their boat landing and dock were salvaged and put to use on the farm.

Twenty-seven years had elapsed before construction started on our home on this picturesque spot. I then could visualize the many advantages afforded here. Unknowingly I ventured into a realm of problems. The reclamation board held easements on the river front property. Banks then would not loan money on this land. Consequently, I had to save and put it away dollar by dollar before beginning construction. Hence the long, long wait.



The general plan or layout had been conceived years before. The rough ideas and drawings were passed on to an architect, who in turn made them readable for our builder. Step by step our progress continued. My obsession was to capture the mile long vista of the river from both directions. The lure of the River was compelling. Everything centered around its fascinating and far stretched beauty.

Activity feeds a true farmer. It was not long before I became involved in another Civic venture. The State of California was about to select a route for Interstate 5. Just prior to the final acceptance of a West-side alignment, with all those millions of highway funds going to our neighboring County, I was alerted to the needs of our own County for more roads and bridges.

I could envisage a new route through Sacramento on an alignment between 2nd and 3rd Streets, with the American River crossing to the north a natural solution. This priceless undertaking was a must. I immediately joined the Chamber of Commerce and asked for an assignment to the road and bridge committee, under the able chairmanship of Herb Silvius, now our State Printer. My proposal was quickly acted upon and a full endorsement of the project received. The follow through, the incorporation into the State Highway system was promptly attained by Mr. Silvius and self, along with many downtown supporters. This one major project made possible the construction of the Metropolitan Airport in the Natomas.

I recall the formation of a neighborhood organization or improvement club, and I well remember our struggle to keep a petroleum tank farm from locating along the river. Later I rejected a profitable offer to convert my property to a trailer court operation. My refusal was necessary if all my past efforts were to be realized. The elimination of an unsightly development was a requisite

if this whole north-west country was to continue its proper growth, and emerge into the future booming center of the new and greater Sacramento.

The major catastrophe of this little well-knit organization fell the year after Marysville and Yuba City were inundated by the flood waters of the Yuba and Feather Rivers. The U. S. engineers had collected huge volumes of water behind Shasta Dam. This in itself was feasible but the mistake of the department was the timing and amounts discharged the following year. Those bankful heavy releases in the late spring caused the underground waters to rise forcing up all the salts and alkali lying latent underneath. The poor trees were unable to handle such severe punishment so suddenly, that they were weakened and lay prey to the deadly pear psylla. It was too much to endure for the former sturdy orchard. The decline triumphed. My orchard was doomed. No recourse, but to pull the former beautiful and profitable trees.

The once pride and joy of all my years of farming was gone, but who knows this again may be the beginning of another thrilling adventure.

The final chapter in this long narration and stirring tale is about to begin. The visionary sight of my father is now quite evident with signs of progress and development all about us. The eight-lane freeway Interstate 5 to Sacramento is an actuality and its completion stresses the growing importance of the Metro Airport. It is now inevitable all our plans and dreams will be fulfilled.

Now as I sit relaxed, gazing out upon the river under the shade of my sound and sturdy oaks, I reflect all that has passed before me, and especially I dream of the new tomorrows awaiting. It has been compelling and inspiring.

I think of the raging winter storms, the bankfull rising waters, sometimes but inches from our lower floor. The excitement of hurridly placing sand bags to slow the rivers rampaging fury and destructive force; and at the end...victory!

The various moods of the river holds you awe stricken and breathless, but it is the glory of the setting sun reflecting its gorgeous beauty all about that inspires! Sometimes all depths of splendor from crimson red to pink and gold, then the many shades of the rainbow are revealed. The summertime evening shadows approach swiftly. It is now that the bordering trees outline their towering elegance on the placid waters. The doves return to roost. Now...all is quiet and serene. What could be more divine?

Briefly expressed it is God's handiwork...sublimely beautiful. The grandeur and charm of it all, impossible to conceive.

I have passed my 73rd birthday, yet each day presents a glorious outlook and challenge to the future. I visualize the rapid expansion of Sacramento Northward. I foresee Vista view Apartments and condominiums all over the once little farm... River View Orchard.

It has been a long, long way, but a lifetime adventure and a very exciting and happy one in all. I ponder the question..."Would it all have been possible without the rigid Bank training I received as a young boy?"

Now I end this memoir with a quotation from dear old dad made many years ago. The story follows: A friend and dad were driving up to a northern duck club. In passing the ranch the friend exclaimed, "Frank, when are you going to get that kid of yours to prune back that Brush Pile Orchard?"

With a big draw on the butt of his inevitable cigar, and amid the heavy cloud of smoke emitted, the answer came prompt and clear. "Well Charley, things were rough for the boy for years and I was called upon to endorse many stiff loans and notes for him. He paid them all off and has not come back for more. Now, Charley, WHY IN HELL should I tell him what to do!"

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This is my finest compliment of all the years along the river. Practically all my goals and aims have been achieved. I am fully and completely satisfied and happy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "E. A. Dwyer". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "E. A." and the last name "Dwyer" clearly distinguishable.